



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

Candace Havens
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 21, 2014

TO: Alderman Marcia T. Johnson, Chairman
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

FROM: James Freas, Acting Director of Planning and Development

RE: #80-13: THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT requesting update discussions of the zoning reform project.

MEETING DATE: November 24, 2014

CC: Board of Aldermen
Planning and Development Board
Donnalyn Kahn, City Solicitor

Phase 1 of the Zoning Reform project is nearly complete. The following outlines the final review steps, to begin at the November 24th meeting. As described below, there are four major components to completing this project.

Final Document Check-through

The heart of this phase of the Zoning Reform project is the production of the reformatted ordinance, which has centered on producing a "policy-neutral" rewrite. The challenge from the beginning has been for staff to re-organize the ordinance without making any changes, except for addressing clear issues of modernization, useability, and existing errors and conflicts. In a document as large and complex as the Zoning Ordinance, errors are inevitable, as evidenced by the existing ordinance, and the final document check-through is how we will weed out and correct any remaining errors. To that end, many eyes on the document are a good thing.

ZAP Review

Beginning with the November 24th meeting, the Zoning and Planning Committee will go through the proposed ordinance article by article. A new draft of the ordinance, delivered this week, has been posted online on the Zoning Reform website and will be distributed at Monday's meeting. For the 24th, the Committee will be going through Articles one through four.

- Article 1. General Provisions: This is the part of the Zoning Ordinance that essentially establishes the ground rules for the entire document. In this section the Zoning Districts and Zoning Map are established and the rules of measurement – defining things like lot area and setback and how these are measured – are described. All of the regulations in the individual zoning districts flow from an understanding of these rules, which is why this is the first chapter.
 - Staff from the IT Department will be on hand to briefly address questions of digital security and map presentation as it relates to the proposed digital Official Zoning Map.
- Article 2. Public Use and Open Space Districts: Sets the rules for these two districts in terms of dimensional requirements and allowed uses.
- Article 3. Residence Districts: Sets the dimensional rules and allowed uses for the single family and multi-family districts. The format is aimed at starting with the type of building one has (or is interested in building) and then defining the rules for that type of building depending on what zoning district your property is in. To the extent possible, all dimensional rules pertaining to a type of building are on one page, though for clarity, the most frequently used building types have more illustrations and therefore go beyond one page.
- Article 4. Business, Mixed Use & Manufacturing Districts: As above, but for the commercially-oriented zoning districts.

ZRAG Review

The Zoning Reform Advisory Group will be asked to review the Draft Zoning Ordinance document and send their comments individually to staff.

Staff Review

Planning Department staff continues to review the draft ordinance document to check for errors and omissions.

Inserting Legislative History

Over the summer an intern researched every citation to the legislative history of the existing Zoning Ordinance. As each section of the Zoning Ordinance has a list of citations at the end of it, and in many cases those sections have been divided and reorganized into different places, the research was necessary in order to correctly place these citations in the new Ordinance. Staff will complete this step before the document is finalized.

Map Corrections

Working with the Department of Inspectional Services, the Information Technology Department, the Clerk's Office, and the City Solicitor's Office, staff completed an extensive review of the existing Zoning Map and found a number of errors. Staff will be docketing a separate item to clean up these issues.

Timeframe

The following meeting dates are proposed to allow completion of this project:

November 24 – Articles 1-4

December 8 – Articles 5-8

December 10 – Zoning Map Corrections and any additional issues

December 18 – Public Hearing

December 22 – Finalized Document voted out of committee